

The New  
**REPORTER**

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*Winners are  
not those  
who never  
fail but  
those who  
never quit*



**T**he 11th Annual Utah Women's Achievement Awards were presented to seven spectacular Utah women in celebration of Women's History Month. The Utah Commission for Women and Families recognized them for their positive contributions to the lives of women and families in Utah.

This year, the candidate pool was outstanding. As a result, the Commission decided that all nominees would

be honored at the gala luncheon. Notable Utah woman, Shelley Osterloh, conducted the event. The awards were presented by First Lady Mary Kaye Huntsman at the Governor's Mansion on March 16.

Piano music was provided by the award-winning students of honorable mention winner Ya Liu. Docents from the Utah Heritage Foundation provided historical tours of the Governor's Mansion.

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Jilenne Gunther grew up in a two-bedroom apartment in New York City with seven other children and attended inner city schools. While she had a positive upbringing, many of her peers did not. They shared their experiences and hardships including abuse and poverty. Because of these experiences, she became determined to serve her community. Jilenne pursued her Masters in Social Work and her Doctorate of Law. During this time she still managed to volunteer in legal clinics. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Jilenne flew to New York City at her own expense to volunteer for a month. She provided a valuable service to the families and victims of 9/11 and many others affected by the tragedy.

According to nominator Michael Klepich, "Jilenne is a tremendous example of strength and dedication." A social worker by passion and attorney by trade, she has dedicated the last twelve years as well as her future to serving families, women and the elderly. As a social worker she helps women and families by guiding them through the complex legal system. She explains the process of court procedures and grand juries, and prepares them emotionally and mentally for testimony before the court. In addition, she helps them write victim statements and keeps them informed of developments and proceedings of their cases.

She is a nationally recognized leader in aging and the law and promotes needs assessments so that government funding can be used more effectively and efficiently. Due to budgetary restrictions she flew at her own expense to Washington D.C. to ensure her studies were presented. Her study was utilized by AARP, the Federal Administration of Aging, and many other state governments to ensure effective use of funding for the aging and law programs.

A sixty-page guide was developed by Jilenne to help the elderly in Utah understand legal terms from receiving social security to avoiding financial exploitation. Jilenne has served on the Gerontology Board and understands the demands and stress that is placed on caregivers and seniors. She speaks regularly on how the law can support and help caregivers and families.

*S*ally Keller is a strong supporter and advocate for women. She has contributed to education for women and their families by involving herself in communities on a local, state and international level. She arrived in Logan, Utah, in 1960 and became involved in the PTA, Utah State University (USU) Faculty Women's League, and Newcomers to name a few organizations. She assisted women and families in making the transition to the valley and served as a resource and support.

She is active in the local chapter of the Philanthropic and Educational Organization for Women (PEO International), an organization that provides scholarships for women and focuses on education. She served on the state board and served as president, and in other leadership positions in the local chapter.

Sally brought International Peacemakers from areas around the world to her community, arranging for high school students to visit with the Peacemaker representative and learn about problems in other areas.

Her involvement with USU's Women's Center spans decades, serving as an advisory board member for over ten years. Through her efforts the local PEO International chapter established a reentry program at USU's Women's Center. She and her husband established a scholarship in their name at the center.

She was involved in Hands Across the Valley conferences in the 1980s to stimulate interest between diverse women in the valley and on campus. Last year she heard the plight of an African woman who needed help. Sally was instrumental in ensuring that the woman received funds to continue her schooling. Sally founded the Alternative Gift Market where holiday gifts help

the homeless, hungry, and impoverished to become self-supporting. She operated the program for many years.

This led to her most recent endeavor—setting up a non-profit corporation specializing in fair-trade goods through volunteer efforts. For Sally, Global Village Gifts is not only about helping artisans from other countries by buying goods from fair-trade groups, but it's about social justice. Artisans send their children to school and provide them with better nutrition. Seventy percent of the artisans are women. All profits go back to the artisans and the local community.

Whenever Sally travels abroad she takes along things that people (especially women) can use to develop saleable skills to become more self-sufficient. She visits women's cooperatives and shares her love of spinning and handicrafts. In 1996, she went to Guam and spun cotton with the women she met. You might say, "Sally has loom and will travel."

Nominator Janet Osborn said, "Our community has opportunities we normally would not have had if not for her long-time volunteer efforts and dedication."



*Sally Keller*

Christina Myers was born in Sweden and speaks five different languages. She is a full-time instructor at Weber State University. Her students agree they have never had a more devoted or caring professor. They say that if anyone could put 48 hours into a day, she could.

One of her passions is the Pioneer Days Rodeo. She is in charge of the hospitality committee. She persuades local business to sponsor daily dinners held at the hospitality booth and organizes meals for all the contestants competing in the rodeo. Event participants say that her appreciation is so genuine it is a privilege to work with her. People from all over have experienced her heartfelt welcome to Pioneer Days Rodeo.

Christina and her husband Shaun heard about an orphanage in Kazakhstan (formally a part of the USSR). They decided to spend a summer vacation working in an orphanage and perhaps adopting a child. After seeing the suffering there they found a way to adopt not one child, but two—increasing the children in their family from four to six.

Christina and Shaun's daughter Anika passed away from cancer of the spine in April 2004. Lynda Allen, who nominated Christina for the Women's Achievement Awards, said "Anika came to my class in a wheelchair with eyes full of love and hope. Christina was my room mother and during those eight months I experienced the best year of my career. To know Anika was to know God."

Every summer, their family vacation is spent helping others. Last summer they went to Ecuador to help build a school for the underprivileged. While there, a young woman approached them. She asked if they could help her daughter, Victoria, who had lost both arms and a leg due to an electrical accident. Not sure what she could do, Christina told the young woman she would try to help.

As soon as they arrived back in Salt Lake City, Christina spoke to the Shriners hospital director. She told him of the young woman named Victoria in Ecuador. The hospital donated the needed prosthetics and fittings. Shaun and Christina paid for all the expenses of getting Victoria and her mother to Salt Lake City and opened their home to them. She was chauffeur, interpreter, and accompanied them to every doctor's visit. While here Christina enrolled Victoria in a skiing class. Victoria's experience in Salt Lake City is one she and her mother will never forget. Christina, her husband Shaun, and their children have enriched others' lives by their unselfish acts.



*Christina Myers*





*Elaine Runyan-Simmons*

Elaine Runyan-Simmons has worked tirelessly for over 22 years to increase awareness of missing and abused children. Her three-year-old daughter Rachael was kidnapped and murdered in 1982 after she was abducted while playing with her brothers. The abduction case of Rachael Runyan is one of the most significant unsolved cases in Utah's history.

It would have been easy for Elaine to give up and give in to her grief but instead she got involved in her community. She is a speaker both nationally and locally, has influenced many Utah legislative bills, and has appeared on television and radio to increase awareness about missing children and improve conditions for abused children. She received first place from the League of Writers in the category of Best Unpublished Novel, for her non-fiction story "The Trampled Flowers, a Story of Abduction."

Her story has appeared on Unsolved Mysteries, The Today Show, Real People, Extra, Crime Solvers, CNN-Fremans Reports, America's Most Wanted and Street Smart Videos.

When Utah launched the Amber Alert in early 2002, it was the ninth state to have a statewide

plan. Now all fifty states use the Amber Alert. Originally the child abduction alert was called the Rachael Alert to honor Rachael Marie Runyan. Utah now calls the plan Amber Alert to avoid confusion.

The Rachael Runyan Award is a special Utah recognition award presented to people who help in the recovery of an abducted child after an Amber Alert. Elaine stated "It is a privilege to present this award and it means a lot to have my daughter remembered this way. We have come a long way towards child protection since this horrendous nightmare happened to our family."

Brittney Dawson, who nominated Elaine for the Women's Achievement Awards, had this to say: "I have known Elaine for nine years and she has never ceased to amaze me. She has been an award winning State Farm insurance agent since 1990 and is always going the extra mile for her clients, working overtime to provide excellent service, and still finds time to serve in her community." Elaine has never received any compensation for her community efforts. Elaine is honored for her years of service to protect children not only in Utah, but throughout the nation.

Joyce Muhlestein is a role model for women's advocacy and has worked on behalf of Utah families and children for over five decades. During this time she has represented parents and families on the local, state, national and international level. Her strong networking abilities and overall capacity for seeing the "big picture" helped her to achieve big dreams where Utah's families and children are concerned.

During her stint as the director of the Utah Family Center, she provided outstanding leadership. Her work started with a dream, and over the years her directorship took the Utah Family Centers from one to seven locations around the state. This brought much needed resources and information to families, from basic needs, improving life skills, and violence prevention, to helping parents assist their children in school.

She served on the National PTA Board of Directors. For two of those years she served on the Health Commission, assuring parents nationwide that they would receive accurate information on health issues that affect children. Joyce was chosen by the Secretary of Education to represent parents on the National Education Research and Policy and Priorities Board. She was selected out of 90 applicants and served six years as the voice of parents at the highest level.

Currently Joyce serves as the co-chair of the Utah Commission on Literacy, promoting literacy throughout the state. Nominator JoAnn Neilson said, "She is 'Mother Goose' to preschoolers around the state—working to inspire imagination and preserve classic literature. Joyce is the mother of nine and the grandmother of 23 beautiful grandchildren—just ask her."

Joyce has lifted Utah to a broader recognition of the strength of mothers and fathers to influence and impact not only their own children's lives, but also the thousands of children in the community in which they live. According to nominator Barbara Smith, "Joyce not only talks the talk, she has personally walked it for the benefit of the children of Utah."



*Joyce Muhlestein*

*Y*a Liu is an acclaimed pianist and outstanding music teacher. She has brought the joy of music to more than one hundred multi-cultural students and their families over the past ten years in Utah. Many of her former students live all over the world today. Her ceaseless efforts to support the arts will leave a legacy in Utah and the rest of the world that will last for generations.

Ya was born in China and worked to become an accomplished concert pianist, earning a Professional Artist Certificate and teaching as an assistant professor of music in Hengwei Cultural Bureau. Ya came to the Utah with her husband in 1993. She began to study English and teach piano to university students. Once she became competent in English she was able to judge higher level piano competitions.

In 1998 she founded the America Northwest Music School, teaching the fundamentals and the finer points of piano excellence. Her students come from many ethnic groups and nationalities, including China, Great Britain, India, Japan, Korea, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam. These students live in Bountiful, Lehi, Logan, Orem, Provo, and Salt Lake City. Ya's students win numerous musical competitions, re-

ceiving high honors in performance tests, and are acclaimed for their performances. They are been honored for Outstanding Performance and Honor's Recital at the National Federation of Music Clubs. Her students perform at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City and win prestigious scholarships at Harvard, Princeton and other universities. One of her students is doing graduate study in Russia, and another is teaching at Shenzhen University in China. Several others completed their master's degree in music and are pursuing music careers in China.

Ya's scope of influence reaches beyond her local students, as she fosters piano arts not only in Utah, but also nationwide and abroad. She is a member of national and state music professional associations and has assisted in international competitions. In 2001, Ya was recognized as an outstanding Chinese American Professional in Utah. She just recently became a naturalized citizen of the U.S.

Award nominator Todd Crawley states, "Ya is the essence of the American dream. She became a U.S. citizen after overcoming many adversities and challenges, and gives herself to the betterment of her students and their families in Utah."



*Ya Liu*



*Ruth Jackson*

Ruth Jackson grew up as a farm girl in Arizona. Her plans for home and family life included warm winters and a husband who smelled of sweat and hay. After studying at Brigham Young University, teaching school in California, and encouraging her husband through law school, her reality became snowy winters, office hours and clean white shirts for her husband.

Her parents were instrumental in fostering Ruth's commitment to education, starting with her job as a first grade teacher after graduating from BYU. Since then Ruth has been active not only in teaching, but with her many associations such as the Utah Commission for Women and Families, National Association of Commissions for Women, Richmond Chamber of Commerce, State School Board Association and BYU Alumni Board.

During her career she has received many honors: the Sevier County Mother of the Year Award, Rural School Board Member of the Year and the Light of Learning Award. Diligently working to improve the quality of education in Utah in all of her endeavors, Ruth continually reaches out to encourage young people to take advantages of all their learning opportunities. Nominator Jan Bennet said of her, "Ruth has a warm smile and a genuine interest in everyone she meets. The families of Utah are better because of Ruth's quiet, effective service."





*From top to bottom:  
Shelley Osterloh, students of Ya Liu, and  
Mary Kaye Huntsman.*

## 2006 Achievement Awards Ceremony

## New Office of Work & Family Life Takes Shape

*A*pril 2005, brought significant changes to the Office of Child Care. This office along with The Utah Commission on Marriage and The Utah Commission for Women and Families were combined to create the Office of Work & Family Life. In the past the three groups operated independently.

Recognizing these entities share many common goals and values, the Department of Workforce Services brought them together under one umbrella; the Office of Work & Family Life.

Each of the three entities continues to act under its current rules but some operations and management functions are now centralized. Cooperating as branches of the same tree, or members of the same family, strengthens these valuable groups and advances the initiatives of all three.



*From L to R: Natalie Harmon, Lynette Rasmussen, Joyce Muhlestein, Rochelle Mills, JoAnn Neilson, and Barbara Smith.*



*From L to R (Back Row): Cleal Bradford, Bruce Parry. (Front Row) Lynette Rasmussen, Emma Houston, Kay Swan, Rochelle Mills, Amy Corroon, JoAnn Neilson and Barbara Smith pose at the 2006 Achievement Awards Ceremony.*

# Did you know...

## *Facts About Women: Population*

- In the 65 years or older category women far outnumber men in Utah—roughly 107,000 females compared with 83,000 males.
- With 32 percent of its population under the age of 18 Utah has the youngest population in the nation.

## *Marriage and Family*

- According to the 2000 Census 58 percent of Utah's Women 15 years and older are married—down from 69 percent in 1950. A higher percentage of Utahns are married than in any other state in the nation.
- About 6 percent of Utah families include seven or more members compared to only 2 percent nationally.

## *Education*

- Roughly 22 percent of Utah women had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2000 compared to 23 percent of U.S. women. Utah men showed a 30 percent rate of college graduation in contrast to the U.S. average of 26 percent.
- Utah women are getting more education but are not keeping up with their male or U.S. counterparts.

## *Labor Force*

- In 1900, 13 percent of Utah women worked outside the home; in 1940, about a fourth; in 2000, 61 percent.
- Women comprise about 45 percent of the Utah labor force.
- Labor force participation is higher for Utah women partially because of the state's young labor force (younger women are more likely to work).
- Almost 60 percent of married Utah women work outside of the home.
- Roughly 74 percent Utah's mothers with school age children work outside of the home.
- About 59 percent of Utah's mothers of preschool-age children work.
- Utah Women generally experience higher unemployment rates than Utah men do.
- The average Utah women worked 33 hours per week in 2002—behind Utah men with an average of 41 hours per week.

*continued*

### Occupations

- Roughly 84 percent of Utah healthcare support occupations are held by women.
- Healthcare support occupations include lower skilled healthcare positions such as aides, orderlies, and assistants and massage therapists.
- A higher percentage of computer/mathematical jobs, healthcare practitioners, business/financial operation occupations, life/physical/social scientists and architecture/engineering occupations are held by U.S. women than by Utah women.
- During 1997 (the most recent data available) women owned almost one-fourth of all Utah business. In addition the number of women-owned business increased more than 40 percent between 1987 and 1997.

### Earning

- Data from the 2000 Census for Utah show the median earning for year-round, full-time male workers at \$36,935 — the comparable figure for female workers is \$24,872.
- On average Utah women made 67 percent of male earnings.
- Nationally, Census 2000 shows a male/female wage gap of 73 percent.
- Utah had the fourth largest wage gap in the nation in 2000, bettering its 1990 performance when Utah showed the widest gap in the nation.
- By age the wage gap is smallest for women between 16 and 24.
- The largest wage gap occurs for Utah men and women with a bachelor's degree. Of course women with bachelor's degrees still make more than those without.
- White men and women show a much larger wage gap than those from minority ethnic or racial groups.
- Many of those occupations with the smallest wage gap are those which require math, science, or analytical skills or are jobs dominated by men.

*Source: Department of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information*



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